

American elected to lead a city in United States history. And it can be told by the countless number of immigrants whom he helped achieve the American dream.

My deepest condolences to his family, community, and Sikh Americans everywhere.●

REMEMBERING CARMEN RAMIREZ

● Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, I rise today to celebrate the life of Carmen Ramirez, a relentless advocate for Oxnard, CA; a champion for the environment; and a dear friend to so many.

Born in Oklahoma—but a true daughter of California—Carmen grew up in the community of Pico Rivera in Los Angeles County. She attended the University of San Francisco and California State University, Los Angeles, before graduating from Loyola Law School.

Her passion for improving the lives of others eventually brought her to Oxnard. Beginning in 1978, Carmen served as a legal aid attorney working to represent low-income Californians of La Colonia. Among her many legal and professional accomplishments, she later served as president of the Ventura County Bar, president of the Women Lawyers of Ventura County, a trustee for The Colleges of Law for Santa Barbara and Ventura, a member of the board of governors for the California State Bar, and a member of the executive committee of the California Bench Bar.

But what drew Carmen into public service was her passion for the environment. In 2007, she joined the fight to oppose a liquefied natural gas project proposed near the beaches of Oxnard, and she fought successfully to protect her community. She would go on to become a staunch advocate in our fight against the climate crisis and to promote renewable energy, always leading with kindness, compassion, and composure.

She was elected to the Oxnard City Council for 10 years, where she served for 8 years as Mayor pro tem, promoting the causes of social and environmental justice. She went on to serve as the first Latina on the Ventura County Board of Supervisors in 2020.

Carmen cared deeply about her community. And in turn, her community cared deeply about her. Just ask one of the hundreds of Californians who crowded Plaza Park to pay tribute at her vigil. Remembered that day in tearful embraces, cutting through the sounds of the mariachi, and echoed in shouts of “Viva Carmen Ramirez!” we can see the lasting memory she leaves behind.

While she was taken too soon from family, friends, and her community, we will always have the example she set—defined by moral leadership and a fundamental care for others—to follow.

“Viva Carmen Ramirez.”

Oxnard, Ventura County, and all of California mourns her loss.●

TRIBUTE TO BISHOP CHARLES E. BLAKE, SR.

● Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, I rise today to congratulate Bishop Charles E. Blake, Sr., on a lifetime of service to his community and a career of caring for others.

Bishop Blake has served as pastor of the West Angeles Church of God in Christ for 53 years—53 years as a pillar of Crenshaw and South Los Angeles.

While it may be hard to believe, there was a time before the name Blake was synonymous with Crenshaw. Charles E. Blake, Sr., was born in Little Rock, AR, into a family of faith. His father was a preacher and well-respected leader in the Pentecostal faith. Both Charles and his brother, J.A., would go on to preach in the Church of God in Christ.

After his family moved to California and notably after his first sermon at the age of 16, he attended California Western University and subsequently earned his master's degree at the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta. It was there—as student body president, surrounded by Black students and faculty, and as a leader of student civil rights marches in Selma and Montgomery—where he began to see the strength of Black community power.

In 1969, he became senior pastor of West Angeles Church, where his powerful sermons from a pulpit in South Los Angeles grew his congregation rapidly and brought together the community. By 1999, what had once been a 300-person church on 5th Avenue and Adams Boulevard had grown to require the construction of the ornate, 5,000-seat West Angeles Cathedral.

Bishop Blake's unwavering faith and exalted message of devotion earned his election as presiding bishop of the Church of God in Christ four times, representing millions of worshippers around the globe. It also led to his appointment by President Obama to the Inaugural Advisory Council on Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships.

But to countless families in South Los Angeles, whether attending a Sunday service or watching the Crenshaw corridor grow around them, his commitment to his community is what is most memorable. Over his decades of leadership, he brought to Crenshaw affordable housing, a performing arts theater, and a K-12 school; encouraged economic growth and businesses that provided jobs to Angelenos; created programs to lift up Black men with educational and financial literacy resources; and secured invaluable attention and resources for neighborhoods in South Los Angeles.

He invested in the Crenshaw corridor when it needed it most, and we thank him for his faith and service.

All of California wishes him and his wife, Lady Mae L. Blake, well in retire-

ment, and we wish his son, Charles E. Blake II, luck in his new role as senior pastor.●

TRIBUTE TO FATHER GREGORY JOSEPH BOYLE, S.J.

● Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, I rise today to congratulate Father Greg Boyle on 50 years of service as a Jesuit priest and as a compassionate leader for families in East Los Angeles.

For over three decades, Father Boyle has served as founder and director of Homeboy Industries, the largest gang rehabilitation and re-entry program in the world. Based in Los Angeles, Homeboy provides an off-ramp for thousands of former gang members and at-risk youth.

Born in Los Angeles in 1954, Father Boyle first joined the Society of Jesus in 1972. After being ordained as a priest in 1984, he went on to serve Dolores Mission Church in Boyle Heights, where he saw the severity of poverty and violence in Los Angeles that condemned generations of Angelenos to hardship, incarceration, and—all too often—the loss of loved ones.

But he didn't shy from the dangers before him or ignore a community in need of care. Guided by the tenets of his faith—of nonviolence, of love, of care for others—he brought together his parish and community leaders to found what would later become Homeboy Industries. At its start, the organization focused on providing educational resources and employment services.

It would soon grow into a haven for hope for thousands of people in East Los Angeles, throughout the region, and beyond. Through Homeboy Bakery, Homeboy Diner, Homeboy Merchandise, and more, hundreds of people find job training and a reason to get up and get better each and every day. And once inside their doors, surrounded by people who have been through similar challenges, Angelenos are provided support for substance abuse, mental health services, and legal and educational resources.

Each month, Homeboy Industries also provides free tattoo removal services for nearly a thousand Californians to remove gang-related tattoos, removing a common barrier to finding work, and providing safety from visible signs of gang affiliation.

Father Boyle has lived his faith through action. Over five decades of service, he has believed in the goodness inherent in each of us. He has had the compassion to give second chances when others wouldn't. And for those who needed a little light, true to his Jesuit mission, he has the persistence to “go forth and set the work aflame.”

In the “lethal absence of hope,” as he describes it, Father Boyle has brought love, understanding, and a bright future to thousands of Angelenos, and we are grateful for his service.●